

Anelida & Arcite

This fals Arcite, of his new fangelnesse,
for she to him so lowly was and trewe,
Took lesse deynthe for his stedfastnesse,
And saw another lady, proud and newe,
And right anon he cladde him in hir hewe,
Wot I not whether in whyte, rede, or grene,
And falsed fair Anelida the quene.

But nevertheles, gret wonder was hit noon
Thogh he wer fals, for hit is kinde of man,
Sith Lamek was, that is so longe agoon,
To been in love as fals as ever he can;
He was the firste fader that began
To loven two, and was in bigamy;
And he found tentes first, but if men lye.

This fals Arcite sumwhat moste he feyne,
Whan he wex fals, to covere his traitorye,
Right as an hors, that can both byte and pleyne;
for he bar hir on honde of trecherye,
And swoor he coude hir doublenesse espye,
And al was falsnes that she to him mente;
Thus swoor this thief, & forth his way he wente.

Alas! what herte might endure hit,
for routhe or wo, hir sorow for to telle?
Or what man hath the cunning or the wit?
Or what man might within the chambre dwelle,
If I to him rehersen shal the helle,
That suffreth fair Anelida the quene
for fals Arcite, that did hir al this tene?

She wepeth, waileth, swowneth pitously,
To grounde deed she falleth as a stoon;
Al crampissheth hir limes cokedly,
She speketh as hir wit were al agoon;
Other colour then asshen hath she noon,
Noon other word she speketh moche or lyte,
But Mercy, cruel herte myn, Arcite!

And thus endureth, til that she was so mate
That she ne hath foot on which she may sustene;
But forth languisshing ever in this estate,
Of which Arcite hath nother routhe ne tene;
His herte was elleswhere, newe and grene,
That on hir wo ne deyneth him not to thinke,
Him rekketh never wher she flete or sinke.

His newe lady holdeth him so narowe
Up by the brydel, at the staves ende,
That every word, he dradde hit as an arowe;
Hir daunger made him bothe bowe and bende,
And as hir liste, made him turne or wende;
for she ne graunted him in hir livinge
No grace, why that he hath lust to singe;

But drof him forth, unneth list he knowe
That he was servaunt to hir ladyshippe,
But lest that he wer proude, she held him lowe;
Thus serveth he, withouten fee or shipe,
She sent him now to londe, now to shippe;
And for she yaf him daunger al his fille,
Therfor she had him at hir owne wille.

232

Ensampler of this, ye thrifty wimmen alle,
Take here Anelida and fals Arcite,
That for hir liste him Dere herte calle,
And was so meek, therfor he loved hir lyte;
The kinde of mannes herte is to delyte
In thing that straunge is, also God me save!
for what he may not gete, that wolde he have.

Now turne we to Anelida ageyn,
That pyneth day by day in languisshing;
But whan she saw that hir ne gat no geyn,
Upon a day, ful sorowfully weping,
She caste hir for to make a compleyning,
And with hir owne honde she gan hit wryte;
And sente hit to hir Cheban knight Arcite.

The Complaynt of Anelida the Quene upon fals Arcite.
Proem.

So thirleth with the point
of remembrance,
The swerd of sorowe,
ywhet with fals plesaunce.
Myn herte, bare of blis and
blak of hewe,
That turned is in quaking
at my daunce,
My suretee in a whaped
countenaunce;
Sith hit availeth not for to ben trewe;
for whoso trewest is, hit shal hir rewe,
That serveth love and doth hir observaunce
Alwey to oon, and chaungeth for no newe.

Not myself as wel as any wight;
for I loved oon with al my herte and
might
More then myself, an hundred
thousand sythe,
And called him my hertes lyf, my
knight,
And was al his, as fer as hit was right;
And whan that he was glad, than was I blythe,
And his disese was my deeth as swythe;
And he ayein his trouthe me had plight
for evermore, his lady me to kythe.

Now is he fals, alas! and causeles,
And of my wo he is so routheles,
That with a worde him list not ones deyne
To bring ayein my sorowful herte in pees,
for he is caught up in another lees.
Right as him list, he laugheth at my peyne,
And I ne can myn herte not restreynne,
That I ne love him alwey, nevertheles;
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.

And shal I pleyne ... alas! the harde
stounde...
Unto my foo that yaf my herte a wounde,
And yet desyreth that myn harm be more?
Nay, certes! ferther wol I never founde
Non other help, my sores for to sounde.

My deatney hath shapen it ful yore;
I wil non other medecyne ne lore;
I wil ben ay ther I was ones bounde,
That I have seid, be seid for evermore!

Alas! wher is become your gentillesse?
Your wordes ful of plesaunce and
humblesse?
Your observaunces in so low manere,
And your awayting and your besinesse
Upon me, that ye calden your maistresse,
Your sovereyn lady in this worlde here?
Alas! and is ther nother word ne chere
Ye vouchesauf upon myn hevinesse?
Alas! your love, I bye hit al to dere.

All certes, swete, thogh that ye
Thus causeles the cause be
Of my dedly adversitee,
Your manly reson oughte it to respyte
To slee your frend, and namely me,
That never yet in no degree
Offended yow, as wisly he,
That al wot, out of wo my soule quyte!

At for I shewed yow,
Arcite,
Al that men wolde to me
wryte,
And was so besy, yow to
delyte...
My honour save... meke,
kinde, and free,
Therfor ye putte on me the
wyte,
And of me recche not a myte,
Thogh that the swerd of sorow byte
My woful herte through your crueltee.

My swete foo, why do ye so, for shame?
And thanke ye that furthered be your
name,
To love a newe, and been untrew? nay!
And putte yow in sclaunder now and blame,
And do to me adversitee and grame,
That love yow most, God, wel thou wost!
alwey?
Yet turn ayein, and be al pleyne som day,
And than shal this that now is mis be game,
And al foryive, whyt that I live may.

O! herte myn, al this is for
to seyne,
As whether shal I preye or
elles pleyne?
Whiche is the way to doon
yow to be trewe?
for either mot I have yow
in my cheyne,
Or with the dethe ye mot
departe us twayne;
Cher ben non other mene weyes newe;
for God so wisly on my soule rewe,

As verily ye sleen me with the peyne;
That may ye see unfeyned of myn hewe.

FOR thus ferforth have I my deth ysoght,
Myself I mordre with my prevy thought;
for sorow and routhe of your unkinde-
nesse
I wepe, I wake, I faste; al helpeth noght;
I weyve joy that is to speke of oght,
I voyde companye, I flee gladnesse;
Who may avaunte hir bet of hevinesse
Then I? and to this plyte have ye me broght,
Withoute gilt; me nedeth no witesse.

And sholde I preye, and weyve woman-
hede?
Nay! rather deth then do so foul a dede,
And axe mercy giltyles! what nede?
And if I pleyne what lyf that I lede,
Yow rekketh not; that know I, out of drede;
And if I unto yow myn othes bede
for myn excuse, a scorn shal be my mede;
Your chere floureth, but hit wol not sede;
ful longe agoon I oughte have take hede.

FOR thogh I hadde yow tomorow ageyn,
I might as wel holde Averill fro reyn,
As holde yow, to make yow stedfast.
Almighty god, of trouthe sovereyn,
Wher is the trouthe of man? who hath hit
sleyn?
Who that hem loveth shal hem fynde as fast
As in a tempest is a roten mast.
Is that a tame best that is ay feyn
To renne away, when he is leest agast?

Now mercy, swete, if I misseye,
Have I seyde oght amis, I preye?
I not; my wit is al aweye.
I fare as doth the song of Chauntepleure,
for now I pleyne, and now I pleye,
I am so mased that I deye,
Arcite hath born away the keye
Of al my worlde, and my good aventure!

FOR in this worlde nis creature
Makinge, in more discomfiture
Then I, ne more sorow endure;
And if I slepe a furlong, wey or tweye,
Than thinketh me, that your figure
Before me stant, clad in asure,
To profren eft a newe assure
for to be trewe, and mercy me to preye.

The longe night this wonder sight I drye,
And on the day for this a fray I dye,
And of al this right noght, ywis, ye recche.
Ne never mo myn yen two be drye,
And to your routhe and to your trouthe I crye.
But welaway! to fer be they to fecche;
Thus holdeth me my destinee a wrecche.
But me to rede out of this drede or gye
Ne may my wit, so weyk is hit, not stretche.

233